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The Austro-Servian Dispute

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THE AUSTRO-SERVIAN DISPUTE

I. THE ASSASSINATION OF THE ARCHDUKE

THE actual event which gave the first impetus to the greatest war of history was the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, but it is obvious that the causes lie far deeper than that mysterious crime. Before considering them, however, it is necessary to inquire what the murder meant for Austria-Hungary. Quite apart from its effects upon foreign policy, his death exercised an infinitely greater influence upon the internal development of the Habsburg Monarchy than the tragic fate of Crown Prince Rudolf twenty-five years earlier. For Francis Ferdinand was one of the outstanding personalities in Europe—with the possible exception of William II, the most masterful member of any reigning house. As his uncle grew older, Francis Ferdinand had come more and more to represent in his own person a great political programme—the overthrow of the effete Dual System, which originally rested on the dominance of two races, the German and the Magyar, over the remaining eight, but which had ceased to “work” since the virtual collapse of the former in all save foreign policy; the regeneration of the Monarchy as a centralist state, on a wide if modified federalist basis; the vindication of the rights of the subject races of Hungary; a policy of internal administrative and linguistic reform; the solution of the Southern Slav question by unifying the Serbo-Croat race under Habsburg rule; and the consequent extension of Austrian influence and prestige in the Balkans.

The Austro-Servian Dispute

He thus incorporated the "Great Austrian" idea in its most ambitious form. Neither German nor Slav nor Latin, but merely "Habsburg" in feeling, he was, both by descent and by temperament, a typical blend of Habsburg and Bourbon. Though not in any sense a pacifist, he was also not an irresponsible militarist. We have the authority of Dr Danev, the Bulgarian ex-Premier, for the assertion that Francis Ferdinand used his influence during the first Balkan War strongly in favour of peace with Serbia; and from another highly reliable source the present writer learnt the remark of the Archduke, dating from the same period, "An Emperor can risk an unsuccessful war, but a Crown Prince cannot." In short, Francis Ferdinand's policy was dynastic and imperialist, and yet in many respects democratic; at the least its fulfilment would have involved a vast step towards democratic ideals. It must be borne in mind that, despite many shortcomings, Austria has made great progress politically in recent years. The real obstacle has always lain in Hungary, where the Magyar oligarchy, aided by its Jewish parasites in the commercial and journalistic world, has monopolized all political power and exploited it in favour of a narrow racial hegemony.

The Sarajevo murder is, and may remain, a hideous mystery. In a country so infested by secret police as Bosnia, Dalmatia and Croatia—where for years past treason-hunts have been the order of the day and indeed treasonable propaganda has often been artificially created to order—it is difficult to understand how so elaborate a plot could have eluded the vigilance of the authorities. It is an open secret that no precautions were taken for the protection of the Archduke and his wife, and without endorsing the widespread assertion that the two murderers, Čabrinović and Princip, were Austrian *agents provocateurs*, we are at least entitled to suspect that they were left free to ply the trade of assassin. This is borne out by the well-authenticated remark made by the Archduke to his suite after the explosion of the bomb—"The fellow will get the Golden Cross

The Assassination of the Archduke

of Merit for this"—a phrase which merely confirms equally authentic and significant remarks made by him on other occasions. Not less suspicious are the shameful anti-Serb excesses which followed the murder. No one who knows anything of Bosnia will pretend that the police and the military were alike powerless to prevent the wholesale sacking of houses and hotels on two successive days by the scum of the bazaar population. *Cui prodest?* Until the great war is over, further investigation will be impossible, and it may be that meanwhile all traces of the real truth will be effaced. For the moment it is enough to point out that despite the widespread horror excited by the outrage, the removal of Francis Ferdinand evoked in many influential circles in Vienna and Budapest feelings of thinly veiled relief. It is only fair to add that while some were influenced by fears for their political monopoly, others were persuaded that his accession to the throne might prove a grave embarrassment to the dynasty, owing to the serious and incurable disease with which he was threatened and which filled both himself and his wife with gloomy forebodings.

The immediate effect of the crime was to remove the one man capable of controlling a difficult situation and to bring the irresponsible elements to the front. The grief of the Army, the Clericals and even of large sections of the Slav population, who each in their own way had looked to Francis Ferdinand as their leader and saviour in the near future, was now skilfully exploited by the very people who secretly rejoiced at his disappearance from the scene. The Magyar oligarchy, which already had its back against the wall, realized that the moment for action had come. Its reactionary ideas of racial dominance found a leader—fanatical, iron-handed, personally equally brave and honest, but politically quite immune from all scruples—in Count Stephen Tisza, the Hungarian Premier.

The murder provided a splendid pretext for aggression. The psychological effect of so dastardly a deed was to unite many discordant elements in anger and revenge, and was

The Austro-Servian Dispute

well calculated to destroy Serbia's reviving reputation in Europe. Nor must one personal factor of the highest importance be overlooked—the effect of such a crime upon the German Emperor. The loss of an intimate and valued friend, the deadly blow struck at a closely allied Power, the peculiar infamy of an outrage upon one of the sacred royal caste, all contributed to make him impervious to argument on the subject, and it is probable that the friction which arose between the Courts of Berlin and Vienna in connection with the Archduke's funeral made William II all the more anxious to show what he regarded as unquestioning loyalty to his ally's cause. To this extent he may be said to have become the cat's-paw of Viennese intrigue, even if there are grounds for believing that other considerations had their effect on his decision.

Vienna and Budapest were at one in attempting to fix the whole blame upon Serbia. The methods employed to convince Europe were the same as those of the Bosnian and Balkan crises of 1908 and 1912, and it is essential to recur briefly to those events.

II. THE CRISES OF 1908 AND 1912

WHEN, as a result of the Young Turkish revolution, Achrenthal decided upon the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a case had to be made out to prove its necessity. In the summer of 1908, therefore—as a result of connivance between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna and the Hungarian Coalition Cabinet and its nominee Baron Rauch, as Ban of Croatia—wholesale arrests were made in Croatia, on charges of treasonable Pan-Serb propaganda; and in March, 1909, while the international crisis was at its height, the notorious High Treason Trial opened at Agram. Three weeks later the Austrian historian, Dr Friedjung, published an article in the *Neue Freie Presse*, in which,

The Crises of 1908 and 1912

on the basis of documents supplied to him by the Foreign Office, he formally accused a number of prominent politicians of the Serbo-Croat Coalition of being in the pay of Belgrade. It is an open secret that if war with Serbia had resulted, these leaders would have been summarily shot, and with them would probably have perished all evidence of the perfidious conspiracy directed against them. The crisis passed, and in due course the libel action brought by the Serbo-Croat leaders against Dr Friedjung came up before a Viennese jury and developed into one of the most sensational political trials of modern times. It was conclusively proved that the "documents" supplied to Dr Friedjung were impudent forgeries, deliberately concocted to ruin the movement for unity and the political parties which advocated it; and the methods of Count Aehrenthal and the officials of the Ballplatz were gravely compromised. Further inquiries, due mainly to the energy of the Czech philosopher and politician, Professor Masaryk, elicited the fact that the forgeries originated in the Austro-Hungarian Legation at Belgrade, which thus was exposed as the centre of the plot to discredit Serbia in the interests of Vienna. When Masaryk, in a scathing speech in the Austrian Delegation, openly denounced Count Forgách, the Minister in Belgrade, as "Count Azev,"* attempts were made to save the latter's reputation at the expense of subordinate members of the legation; but his moral responsibility for the forgeries was finally established by the tactical errors of Aehrenthal and his official press.†

These shameful methods, in every way worthy of the worst police-state traditions of Napoleon or Metternich, not only aroused the bitterest feeling throughout Southern Slav lands, but rendered friendly relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia almost impossible. When Count

* An allusion to the notorious Russian *agent provocateur*, who was at once a member of the secret police and of the revolutionary organization.

† See a detailed account of this incident in Seton-Watson's *Southern Slav Question*, chapter xii.

The Austro-Servian Dispute

Berchtold succeeded Count Achrenthal as Foreign Minister, there seemed to be some prospect of improvement, but though personally beyond reproach he was far too indolent and superficial to attempt any reform of the system which lay like a canker at the heart of Austrian foreign policy. Not merely did the old bureaucratic gang remain, but ere very long Forgách, who had in the meantime been transferred from Belgrade to the less electric atmosphere of Dresden, was actually summoned to the Ballplatz as one of the chief directors of Balkan policy. The anti-Servian campaign, hitherto in the hands of the two under-secretaries, Kania and Macchio, thus passed under the control of a still more pronounced enemy of the Southern Slavs. That there was no provocation on the part of Serbia it would be idle to assert. Indeed, it may be admitted that the authorities in Belgrade did little or nothing to repress those anarchic and unruly elements which are so much in evidence in all the Balkan capitals and which are systematically encouraged by a noisy gutter press. But such inaction is partly explained by the notorious part played in Belgrade by the secret agents of Vienna and Budapest. Nor should it be forgotten that all overtures from Belgrade were consistently and almost contemptuously rejected by the Ballplatz. At the height of the Balkan crisis three prominent Austrian politicians visited Belgrade with the definite object of promoting an understanding, though without any formal authorization from Vienna; and one of them, who enjoys the confidence of almost all Southern Slavs, was empowered by the Servian Premier, Dr Pašić, to put forward such far-reaching proposals on the part of the Servian government as would have revolutionized the whole relations of the Monarchy with its Balkan neighbours. This offer contained the promise not only of railway, road and bridge concessions throughout the new Servian territories to Austrian capitalists, but even the pledge of the "most favoured nation" clause in the next commercial treaty. Count Berchtold's attitude towards these advances, com-

The Crises of 1908 and 1912

bined with the scandals of the Prochaska affair* at the same time, forced Pašić to the conclusion that friendship with Austria was impossible, and greatly strengthened the influence of that arch intriguer, M. Hartwig, the Russian Minister in Belgrade. The hostile attitude of the Monarchy towards Servia during the first war was still further accentuated in the second war, when Bulgaria received large material aid from Vienna and was publicly encouraged in her aggressive attitude by a famous speech of the Hungarian Premier, Count Tisza. The keen hostility towards Servia which inspired Count Forgách, Baron Macchio† and their colleagues in the Ballplatz, must be regarded as a very important factor in the situation, nor should their relations with the German Ambassador in Vienna—an active enemy of all Slav movements, whether in Russia or in Austria—be overlooked.

It is well, then, to realize the determining factors in Austria-Hungary after the removal of the "strong man." The old Emperor, peace-loving and possessed of unrivalled experience, but entirely devoid of all initiative and no longer able to check or hold back the forces working around him. The Court clique, consisting of his Chamberlain, Prince Montenuovo, his aide-de-camp, Count Paar—both open enemies of the late Duchess of Hohenberg—and certain female influences, ringing him round as by a Chinese wall of preconceived ideas. Konrad von Hoetzendorf, an

* The occupation of Prizren by the Servian army and the consequent isolation of Mr Prochaska, the Austro-Hungarian Consul in that town, from his government, provided the latter with a convenient pretext for inaugurating an anti-Serb campaign and inflaming public opinion. For a fortnight the entire population of Vienna firmly believed that Prochaska had been shamefully mutilated by the Serb troops, and it was only when he arrived unhurt in Vienna that the legend fell to the ground. At the same time similar libels against Servia were propagated in Vienna—notably a circumstantial account of how General Živković had with his own hand murdered the Albanian leader Isa Boljetinac! In reality they never met.

† It is worth noting that after Italy's declaration of neutrality Macchio was dispatched as ambassador to Rome, in a last despairing effort to drag Italy into active support of the Triple Alliance and incidentally to poison the minds of Italian statesmen against Servia.

The Austro-Servian Dispute

able soldier, but a man without a trace of judgment, balance or statesmanship, ready to stake all on a gambler's throw.* The Foreign Office clique, with its sinister record, utterly shortsighted and uninspired. The German Ambassador, Tschirschky, with all the supporters he could muster in the financial and journalistic world. Count Stürgkh, the Austrian Premier, whose complete insignificance rendered the task of the extremists easier. Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, a Calvinist fanatic ready to die in the last ditch for an ideal as perverted and anachronous as that which inspired Paul Krüger.

III. THE RACE ISSUE

WHAT is it, then, that has rendered friendship between Austria-Hungary and Servia impossible. The obstacle is at once economic and national. Let us deal with the former issue first. Servia, as an inland country, found her economic independence hampered and threatened at every turn by her powerful neighbour, while on the other hand the provinces of Dalmatia and Bosnia, which form geographically the seaboard of Servia and are inhabited by men of her own race, are in alien hands. Her efforts at economic emancipation under King Peter led to the so-called "Pig War" against the Monarchy; but though unexpectedly successful in finding new markets, the Serb peasants felt the pinch of such a struggle and repaid it in an increased hatred of Austria-Hungary. At this point came the Young Turkish Revolution and the consequent annexation of Bosnia by Achrenthal. Of course it had long been obvious

* As long ago as December, 1912, after the Servian victories in the first Balkan war, Konrad took steps to ascertain the opinion of an observer whom he thought to be competent, upon the expediency of an immediate attack upon both Servia and Russia. Simultaneously the Austro-Hungarian War Office opened a list for the registration of correspondents of foreign newspapers who would be allowed to follow the Austrian army in the intended war against Russia.

The Race Issue

to external observers that in 1878 Austria-Hungary had come to stay, and that her effective administration would never again be superseded by the phantom Turkish suzerainty. Yet that act, though only technically a breach of international law, touched the whole Serb race to the quick and led to violent outbursts of impotent fury. For some months it seemed as though Serbia and Montenegro were bent upon staking their very existence upon war with the Monarchy. Aehrenthal, of course, adhered stubbornly to the policy of annexation. Russia, after encouraging the sister States in their diplomatic resistance, abandoned them to their fate when Germany stepped forth in "shining armour" to support her ally. Nothing was left for them but a humiliating submission, embodied in the document which Viennese diplomacy has made a convenient point of departure for the Austrian Note to Serbia.*

This reverse had a chastening effect upon Serbia and restored her to a sense of hard realities. From that day dates the rapid renaissance of her national spirit, and of its most practical form of expression, the Servian army. No one who visited Belgrade in 1908-9 and returned in 1912-3 could fail to wonder at the transformation. The two Balkan wars revealed Serbia to the outside world as a real military power, revealed, too, the latent possibilities of the Serb race. Expansion on natural lines to the west having been artificially prevented, Serbia now had to look for other exits, and the first result of her victories over the Turks was her occupation of Northern Albania and of the very inferior but tolerable ports of Durazzo and Medua. Berchtold was too shortsighted to realize that for reasons of physical geography these harbours could never become naval bases, that their mountainous hinterland was likely to be a source of weakness to the conquerors, and that the moment had arrived for finally tempting the Serbs into the Austrian sphere of influence by the bait of generous commercial concessions through Bosnia and Dalmatia. Turning a deaf

* See White Paper, No. 4.

The Austro-Servian Dispute

ear to those who urged such a policy upon him, he imposed an absolute veto upon Servian expansion on the Adriatic and devoted himself to causing friction among the allies. Servia thus had no alternative save to seek her economic outlet down the valley of the Vardar, and in so doing she came into violent conflict with Bulgarian aspirations in Macedonia. To the Ballplatz a war between the allies was the first condition to that Austrian advance on Salonica which still remained the ideal of an influential section of Austrian and Hungarian opinion.

But the issues involved lie far deeper than the quarrel between Belgrade and Vienna or Budapest. The unity of a race of eleven millions is at stake—the future of all the wide lands that lie between Villach and Monastir, between Neusatz and Cattaro. The subjoined table shows existing political subdivisions and gives some idea of the untenable situation of the Southern Slavs.

	Croat	Serb	Slovene	Serbo-Croat-Moslem
1. Under Austria:				
(a) Dalmatia . . .	600,000	100,000	—	—
(b) Istria . . .	200,000	—	100,000	—
(c) Carniola } Carinthia } . . .	—	—	1,200,000	—
2. Under Hungary				
(a) Croatia-Slavonia	1,750,000	650,000	—	—
(b) Banat, and W. Counties . . .	200,000	450,000	100,000	—
3. Under Austria-Hungary jointly				
Bosnia-Herzegovina	450,000	850,000	—	600,000
4. Independent Servia .	—	3,250,000	—	—
5. Independent Montenegro	—	350,000	—	—
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3,200,000	5,650,000	1,400,000	600,000
United total . . .	10,850,000			

While Servia, released by the hideous tragedy of 1903 from the corrupt and irresponsible yoke of the Obrenovitch, entered upon a new era under a rival dynasty, a movement

The Race Issue

of almost equal importance was taking place among her kinsmen across the Save and Drina. In 1905 the scattered opposition parties of Croatia combined into the so-called Croato-Serb Coalition, and at the conferences of Fiume and Zara adopted a programme of constructive reform as the basis of joint political action on the part of both races. The immediate result was that the party which for the previous twenty years had ruled Croatia in the interests of Budapest by the aid of every imaginable corruption and violence, at once lost its majority and collapsed. After a brief reconciliation with the Magyars, the Croato-Serb Coalition was driven once more into opposition: but nothing could now check the growing perception that Croat and Serb are one race, divided only by differences which the modern world no longer regards as the excuse for a family feud. To check this movement for unity, Vienna and Budapest resorted to the systematic persecution of the Serbs of Croatia. Wholesale arrests and charges of treason led up to the monster trial at Agram, which dragged on for seven months amid scandals worthy of the days of Judge Jeffreys. The Diet ceased to meet, the constitution of Croatia was in abeyance, the elections were characterized by corruption and violence such as eclipsed even the infamous Hungarian elections of 1910; the press and the political leaders were singled out for special acts of persecution and intimidation. These tactics seemed to have reached their height in the Friedjung trial (December, 1909), to which reference has been made above, and its scandals led to the fall of Baron Rauch, who, as Ban of Croatia, had been responsible for many of the worst abuses. But there was merely a change of person, not a change of system, and ere long the friction between Magyar and Southern Slav was as acute as ever. Serbo-Croat unity was only cemented by persecution, and the movement soon extended to the kindred Slovenes and struck root even among the most confirmed Clericals. In the spring of 1912 the conflict between Agram and Budapest culminated in the abolition of the Croatian constitution,

The Austro-Servian Dispute

in the appointment of an unscrupulous official as dictator, and a few months later in the suspension of the charter of the Serb Orthodox Church. From an Austrian point of view nothing could have been more unfortunate. For close on the heels of these crying illegalities and the lively demonstrations and unrest which they evoked, came the Balkan war, the crushing victories of the allies over Turkey, the resurrection of the lost Servian empire, the long-deferred revenge for the defeat of Kosovo. The Southern Slav provinces of the Monarchy were carried off their feet by a wave of almost ecstatic enthusiasm for the Balkan League, and an almost impossible situation was reached when the Austro-Hungarian Government placed itself in violent conflict with Servia, vetoed her expansion to the Adriatic, insisted upon the creation of an independent Albania and mobilized to enforce her openly Serbophobe policy. Even during Cuvaj's regime in Croatia, in other words in the spring preceding the war, the movement of national protest had spread far beyond the classes which usually control such movements. Its infection had spread to the schools, and on one occasion practically every boy and girl above the age of fourteen in the schools of Croatia, Bosnia and Dalmatia had indulged in a spontaneous and well-organized political strike! On such soil the Balkan war struck deep root, and in one short year the Southern Slav youth was irretrievably lost for Austria. The moderate politicians lost all hold upon the younger generation: the students simply ignored them and went their own way. Many dreamt of revolution, all alike looked to Servia as the daystar of national liberty. Such was the *milieu* out of which came the group of youthful fanatics whose act of terrorism has set Europe in a blaze. Those whose sympathy for the Italian Risorgimento is not damped by the methods of the Carbonari or of Mazzini's disciples, who do not despair of Russian freedom because its cause has been stained by acts of terrorism, will not condemn a whole nation for the crimes of a few raw and unbalanced striplings. The hideous irony

The Race Issue

of it all is that Francis Ferdinand was the one man capable of righting the desperate internal situation; the one man in high quarters who was resolutely opposed to Magyar policy towards the Hungarian nationalities and towards Croatia and resolved to attempt some drastic solution of the Southern Slav problem, as soon as fate should grant him the opportunity.

To sum up, it cannot be too strongly affirmed that the incentive to the crime came from within the Monarchy, from the intolerable misrule of the Magyars, aggravated by Viennese connivance. While it is true to say that the existence of an independent Serbia kindled the imagination of the Serbs and Croats within the Monarchy and rendered them restless under galling political conditions, and that Belgrade, like all other Balkan capitals, contains anarchical and revolutionary elements eager to make mischief across the frontiers, there are, on the other hand, no grounds whatever for supposing that official Serbia had any connection with the crime. Everything points to the opposite conclusion, for the murder occurred at a moment when Serbia was specially in need of peace. The Concordat with the Vatican had only been signed a week before; the negotiations regarding the Orient railway had reached a critical stage; above all the customs and military union between Serbia and Montenegro was on the point of being proclaimed and there was even a prospect of a final arrangement regarding the mutual relations of the Karageorgevitch and Petrovitch dynasties. In other words, in the absence of proof the presumption would be in favour of aggression from Vienna to prevent Servian consolidation, rather than from Belgrade in favour of a criminal provocation of the Habsburg Monarchy.

The one mistake made by Serbia was her omission to offer a thorough inquiry, without waiting for any such suggestion from Vienna; and there is reason to believe that this step was prevented by M. Hartwig, whose whole policy had been devoted to embittering still further the relations of Serbia

The Austro-Servian Dispute

and the Monarchy. His sudden death within a fortnight of the murder, during an official call upon his Austro-Hungarian colleague, seemed to many observers a signal example of retributory justice. In this connection, however, it is right to point out that as in Teheran so in Belgrade M. Hartwig often far outran the instructions or intentions of his Government, and that the appointment of Prince Gregory Trubetzkoi, the gifted exponent of Russian foreign policy,* as his successor at the Russian Legation in Belgrade, was a markedly conciliatory act on the part of St Petersburg.

IV. THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ULTIMATUM

THE Austro-Hungarian Note to Serbia is susceptible of only one interpretation; it was deliberately couched in such terms as to be unacceptable. No possible loophole was left by which Serbia could save her self-respect or prestige. And yet the impossible happened, and Serbia accepted the most galling of the demands made upon her, merely making certain reservations upon two out of the ten chief points, without expressly rejecting even them. Not content with this humiliating submission, the Servian Government three days later, through the medium of its representative in Rome, informed the Italian Foreign Minister that it was actually prepared to accept the whole Note, if only "some explanation were given regarding the mode in which Austrian agents would require to intervene," and even went so far as to offer to accept these explanations from a third party, if Austria-Hungary was not disposed to give them to Serbia direct.† The best proof, however, of Serbia's conciliatory attitude lies in her offer to submit any points not fully met by her reply to the decision of the Hague Tribunal, where there would obviously have been little sympathy for terrorist conspiracies, or to that of the Powers who had

* See his *Russland als Grossmacht* 1, trans. by Josef Melnik. Stuttgart. 1913.

† White Paper, No. 64.

The Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum

dictated the terms of her surrender to Austria-Hungary in March, 1909.*

That Austria-Hungary was not satisfied with so abject a surrender, shows that war had been resolved upon from the first. The best proof of this is the inclusion of a time limit of forty-eight hours, a step which paralysed all efforts towards peace and was directly responsible for the catastrophe which has overtaken Europe. It is almost impossible to resist the conclusion that Berlin shares with Vienna the responsibility for this time limit; and this is further strengthened by the frank admission of the *German White Paper*, that Germany "gave Austria an entirely free hand against Servia."† The German contention that Austria-Hungary could not be summoned before a European tribunal, was probably put forward in perfect good faith by Berlin: but it shows a failure to reckon with the facts of the situation, since on the one hand it ignored the all important precedent of the Dogger Bank,‡ and on the other hand gave in effect a free hand to Count Forgách and his methods. The Agram and Friedjung trials§ and the scandals connected with the names of Nastić, Vasić and Forgách, provide the real explanation why Austria-Hungary was disinclined to go to the Hague, and when the war is over, other still weightier reasons will probably transpire. The dossier appended to the Note and submitted as its

* White Paper, No. 39.

† The German White Paper was not like the English one, a complete collection of the dispatches which passed during the negotiations, but a statement of German policy with a few supporting documents. It was laid before the Reichstag on August 4.

‡ It will be remembered that the Russian Baltic Fleet fired on some British trawlers in the North Sea at the outset of its voyage to the Far East during the Russo-Japanese war. The incident brought the two countries to the verge of war, but was satisfactorily disposed by the agreement of the two Powers to submit their differences to the Hague Tribunal.

§ At the Friedjung Trial Dr Spalajkovic, in the name of the Servian Government, formally offered to submit the whole case to the Hague Tribunal. The anxiety and disfavour with which this proposal was greeted in Vienna was very marked, and betrayed itself especially in the attitude of the presiding judge and of the semi-official inspired press.

The Austro-Servian Dispute

justification to the representatives of the Great Powers, was, to say the least, suspect, since it rested upon a one-sided and secret investigation conducted in the prison of Sarajevo. The attitude of the outside world could not have been better summed up than by Sir Edward Grey in the opening document of his memorable White Paper, in which he assumed that the Austrian Government "would not do anything until they had first disclosed to the public their case against Servia, founded presumably upon what they had discovered *at the trial*." There has been no trial, and there probably never will be. In other words, the dossier, even if it had not passed through the office of Count Forgách, was not evidence in any western sense of the word.

The ostensible aim of Austria-Hungary is a "punitive expedition" against a turbulent and unprincipled little neighbour, and to those ignorant of her internal racial conditions this explanation may seem plausible enough. But the real issues at stake are the continuance of the effete Dual System, which has so long blocked the path of every real reform in the Monarchy; the maintenance of the Magyar racial hegemony over the non-Magyar races of Hungary, the perpetuation of the political and economic bondage of the Southern Slavs. This attempt on the part of a narrow and reactionary clique to bolster up an impossible *status quo* and hold back the clock of history, can only end in moral and political bankruptcy, but its authors seem determined to drag down Europe in their fall. More than anyone in Europe—more even than the rival war parties in Berlin, Petersburg and Vienna—the Magyar oligarchy is directly responsible for this war; for it is their oppressive treatment of the nationalities and above all their misgovernment of Croatia, reacting upon Bosnia and Dalmatia, which has kept the Southern Slav question as an open sore on the face of Europe and permanently embroiled the Monarchy with the independent Serb states. Just as the German people's perfectly comprehensible dread of

The Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum

Russia is being exploited by the Prussian military chiefs, so the unhappy peoples of Austria-Hungary are being exploited in favour of a system which runs directly counter to the interests and aspirations of the majority among them.

For a moment it seemed as though Austro-Russian complications might be averted by the assurances given by Austria-Hungary in Paris, that the integrity of Serbia would be respected.* But to those who knew enough to look below the surface it was obvious that such a pledge, even if given in all honesty, was almost worthless. The Servians were prepared to fight to the last man in defence of their independence, and Austrian success would have found the sister kingdoms in a condition in which the victors would have had no choice but annexation. Count Mensdorff's eager assurance (No. 137) that Austria-Hungary had no idea of re-occupying the Sandjak, was either naïve or perfidious; for our Foreign Office can hardly have been ignorant of the notorious facts that the Austrian General Staff had long ago decided that the Sandjak, as a line of strategic advance, was worthless by comparison with the Morava valley, and that any fresh advance into the Sandjak would infringe the Balkan understanding between Austria-Hungary and Italy. There are many indications that the real Austrian objective was Salonica.†

In time of peace there was always some hope, despite the ever recurring errors of Viennese and Magyar diplomacy, that the Southern Slav question might be solved peacefully within the Habsburg Monarchy. But with the death of the Archduke that hope also died. The question immediately

* A prime reason of the evacuation of the Sandjak in 1908 was Italy's contention that the annexation of Bosnia altered the Balkan *status quo* to her disadvantage. When during the first Balkan war Italy's attitude in the Albanian question was regarded by Serbia as unfriendly, the Italian Minister in Belgrade made repeated efforts to convince the Serbian Government that Italy's action with regard to the Sandjak had been inspired by friendly consideration for Serbia and Montenegro.

† See White Paper, No. 19 (Sir R. Rodd's dispatch of July 25) and No. 82 (Mr Beaumont's of July 29).

The Austro-Servian Dispute

assumed European importance, just as it had already done in 1908 and in 1912. Unfortunately the statesmen of Vienna, Budapest and Berlin, while basing their case upon the Servian Note of March, 1909 (acknowledging the situation of Bosnia to be no concern of hers), ignored the fact that this note was extracted from Serbia, and its phraseology determined, by joint action on the part of the Powers, and persistently argued that the same question in its new form was a matter which concerned no one in Europe save Serbia and Austria-Hungary. This fatal attitude, based on a complete misreading of past history and on a failure to comprehend the point of view of ally and opponent alike, was adhered to despite repeated warnings from St Petersburg, London and other capitals.* The result is universal war.

On July 16 Count Tisza affirmed in the Hungarian Parliament that the relations of the Monarchy with Serbia must be "cleared up," and subsequent events have revealed the drift of his ideas. To-day Britain may well adopt his phrase and insist that among many other results of this horrible war, the Southern Slav question shall be definitely cleared up, but in accordance with the wishes, not of the Magyar oligarchy, but of the Serbo-Croat race. The action of the allied French and British fleets upon the Adriatic, and their co-operation with the Montenegrin and Servian armies, should ere long place us in a position to assure such a solution.

* Cf. White Paper, Nos. 3, 10, 17, 48, 101, etc.

The full contents of the Special War Number of THE ROUND TABLE, September, 1914, from which the preceding article is reprinted, is as follows:

The War in Europe

Origins (1) in Austro-Hungarian Politics; (2) in the Aims of Modern Germany—The Critical Fortnight—Ultimate Issues

Germany and the Prussian Spirit

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